

MARINE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE SEAS: WHAT IS THE EU DOING?

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Seas and Oceans are a critical source of food, energy, mineral and biological resources, as well as the medium for the most efficient mode for transport of goods. They are also submitted to increased pressure from human activities and climate change. Pollution, contaminants, eutrophication, destruction of habitats, acidification are profoundly affecting the marine environment. As more and more activities are developed or pushed offshore, this situation is compounded by an increasing competition for marine space.

The EU maritime policy is intended to be an integrated answer to these challenges. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive sets the ambitious objective of defining and reaching Good Environmental Status for our regional seas. We are in a situation where legislation is ahead of science. With a growing demand for food and energy and in times of financial crisis and budgetary constraints, policy makers expect marine science and technologies to provide answers and help reconcile sometimes conflicting objectives.

It is clearly a big challenge for marine science and technologies. But it is also an opportunity to be identified as a key factor to help address such societal challenges. In the face of such challenges, marine scientists might have to be more engaged with society. Marine science and technologies might not hold answers to all questions and challenges. But it is clear that without marine science and technologies, and new ways to undertake them, no solutions to our 'seas and oceans' challenges are possible.